DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 060 EC 124 325

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TITLE Teaching Emotionally Disturbed Students to Count Feelings.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of The Council for Exceptional Children (58th, Philadelphia, PA, April, 1980, Session W-66).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; *Behavior Problems; *Emotional Disturbances; High School Students; *Humanistic Education; Program Descriptions; Secondary Education; *Self Concept

ABSTRACT

The paper describes a program to teach high school students with emotional and behavior problems to count their feelings, thereby improving their self concept. To aid in instruction, a hierarchy was developed which involved four phases: counting tasks completed and tasks not completed, counting independent actions in class, counting perceptions of the teacher's positive and negative statements to the class during the course of the hour, and counting positive and negative feelings about themselves. By following the steps of the hierarchy, students were taught to count, personalize the counting, identify positives and negatives, and combine these skills to reach the goal of counting positive and negative self feelings. (SBH)

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Teaching Emotionally Disturbed Students to Count Feelings

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Everyone has thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, for some people, these thoughts and feelings are easy to identify. Other times they are not as easy. Do you feel self- confident right now? independent? dependent? content? anxious? Perhaps you feel some of each. This paper focuses on feelings and how to count those feelings.

Counting Inner Behavior

It is not a new idea to have people count feelings. Houston (1971) asked men and women to count feelings of human rights violated. Duncan (1971) reported two children counting inners-- one selfish thoughts and the other feelings of anger. Dean (1973) had nursing students count positive and negative feelings about nursing areas. Stromberg (1974) reported teenagers counting feelings in personal, social, and academic areas. Calkin (1979) did a study in which children, teenagers, and adults counted feelings of freedom in different situations. All these studies reported the data on the Standard Celeration Chart. While this chart has most frequently been used in classroom settings for recording academic and management behaviors, it has also been used for measuring inner change.

The person who has the feeling counts it and records the daily frequency on the Standard Celeration Chart. Positive feelings are marked with a dot; we want them to increase. Negative feelings are marked with an x; we want them to decrease. When we have 10 days of frequency we have enough data to see its trend. It may be accelerating or it may be decelerating. If it is a positive behavior or feeling and increasing, then we leave it alone to grow on its own. If it is a negative behavior or feeling and is decreasing, then we also leave it alone to decrease on its own.

It helps to count a pair-- tasks completed and not completed, independent and dependent thoughts, positive and negative feelings. By charting two parts of a pair we can look at the trend of both to see if there is maximum change, i.e., the positive behavior is accelerating and the negative behavior is decelerating. This would be the ideal pair.

Initial Attempts to Count Inners

The authors work at Capital City Schools in Topeka, Kansas, a residential and day school for elementary and secondary students with emotional and behavior problems. Three staff members counted positive and negative self-thoughts and feelings. After about ten days of counting, each of us began a daily one minute timing writing as many positives as we could. Each chart showed improvement with the use of the one minute timing. Each of us felt better about ourselves too. We thought this technique would be an easy way to help our students to improve their self-concept.

During the year, we tried to help our high school students become more familiar with their feelings. This has proved to be a monumental task because most emotionally disturbed children have a low self-concept and are unaware of their feelings, deny, or suppress them. This project involves counting a feeling or an action and charting it, the goal being that the positive feelings will accelerate and the negative feelings will decelerate. It is our theory that when the goal is achieved, the students would feel better about themselves and have a higher self-concept.

With these ideas and goals in mind, the teacher began teaching her 1979 summer school classes. When she announced the charting project to the class, groans filled the air. Two days later she had mass rebellion.

Students would not count feelings or chart; neither would they do their regualar social studies assignment. The teacher asked the students what the problem seemed to be. Most of the students felt very threatened by the counting and charting. Their primary fear was that she would show their charts to their doctor or therapist. They did not want this to happen. The second problem voiced was many students did not know the actual mechanics of counting itself. The third problem of the students was that they were not aware of the differences between positive and negatives. They could not identify what felt good and what felt bad. The teacher spent a lot of time that summer trying to convince students to count or trying to teach the convinced how to count. The charts resulting from these summer experiences showed no change in positive or negative feelings.

The end of summer school brought the beginning of a long month of evaluating the summer's disaster and determining the strategy for the fall project. We decided that students would evaluate the teacher's behavior. The fall project involved having students count the number of positives and negatives the teacher said to any student during the course of the hour. Figure 1 shows the results of Sarah's counting activities. This set of charts is particularly interesting because the frequency of negatives the teacher gave in class is particularly high on some days. It was right at this time that a very disruptive student enrolled in the class. Sarah, the student counting the teacher's behavior, interpreted all the times she needed to say "sit down," "let's get busy," and

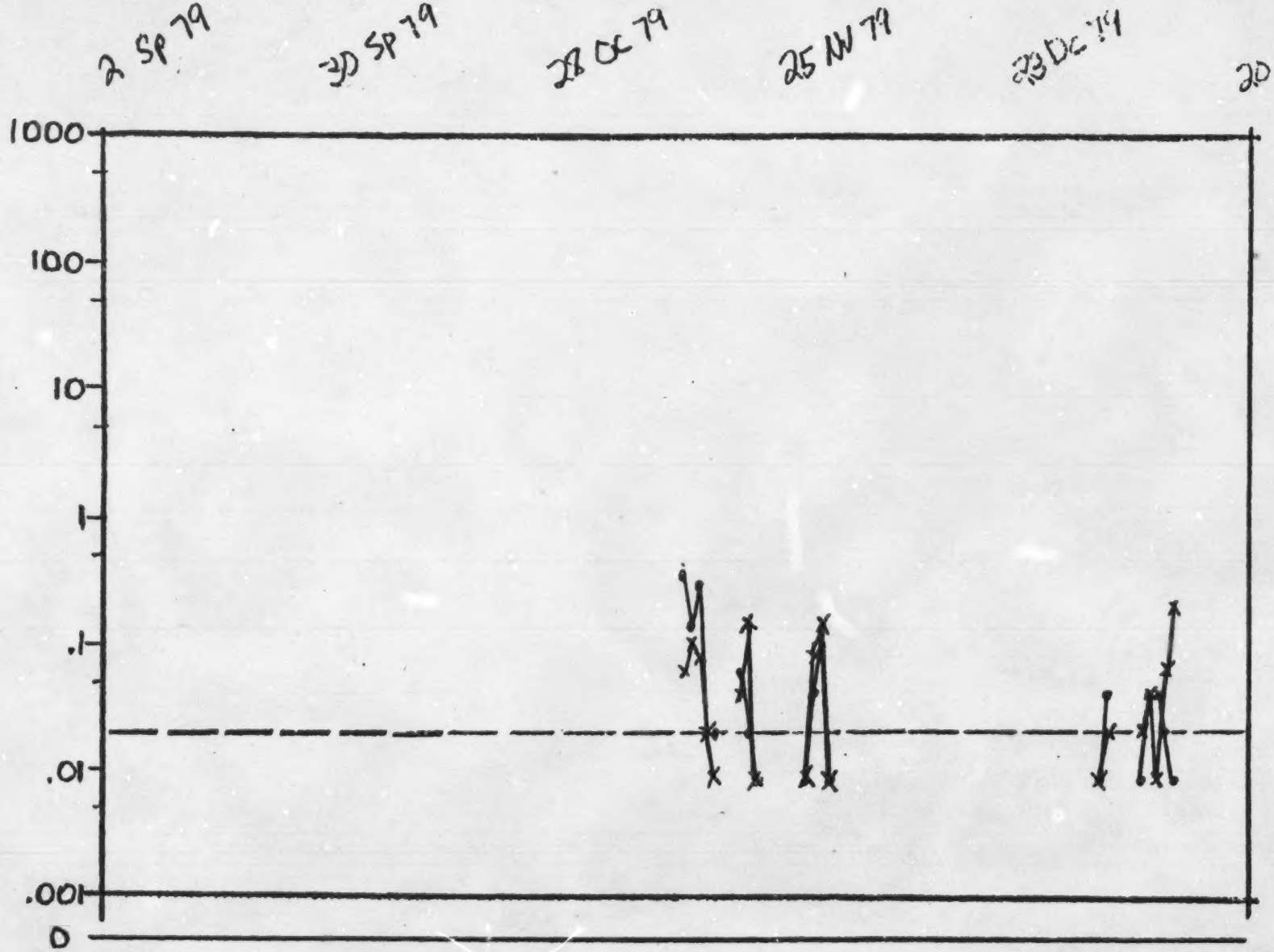

Figure 1

A. Calkin C Bartels Sarah 14 student teacher's Statement to: class

6 Capital City Schools Topeka, Ks. CBartels Sarah Bartels/Sarah 7

"please be quiet" as negative responses. The high negative days correspond to the days when she was not in class. A chart such as this would possibly suggest that a change in strategy such as an increase of positives rather than negatives could possibly have helped the student improve her behavior. Surely the teacher would have felt better by being more positive in that class.

A student in a different class, Susan, also counted the teacher's positives and negatives to the class during the class period for about three weeks. During that time she never counted any negatives. When the teacher recognized this, she purposely said negatives. Susan never counted them. At this point the teacher decided she and Susan would count positives and negatives spoken by Tina (another student), the teacher, and Susan. They both counted for six days.

Figure 2 shows Susan's frequencies. Susan recorded a few positive responses from the teacher. She recorded Tina having only one positive response during the entire counting period. Susan showed herself as having no positives at all. When compared to the teacher's chart in Figure 3, we see how differently the teacher and Susan perceived what was being said in class. The teacher counted more positives and more negatives from everyone. Susan counted no negatives from the teacher or herself. She did recognize Tina's negatives, though. When her chart is compared to the teacher's we see that Susan did not perceive anyone's negatives to the same extent that the teacher did. These charts show that the teacher and Susan perceive positives and negatives in class differently.

Developing a Hierarchy of Feelings

By the end of the first semester, we realized we had not made the

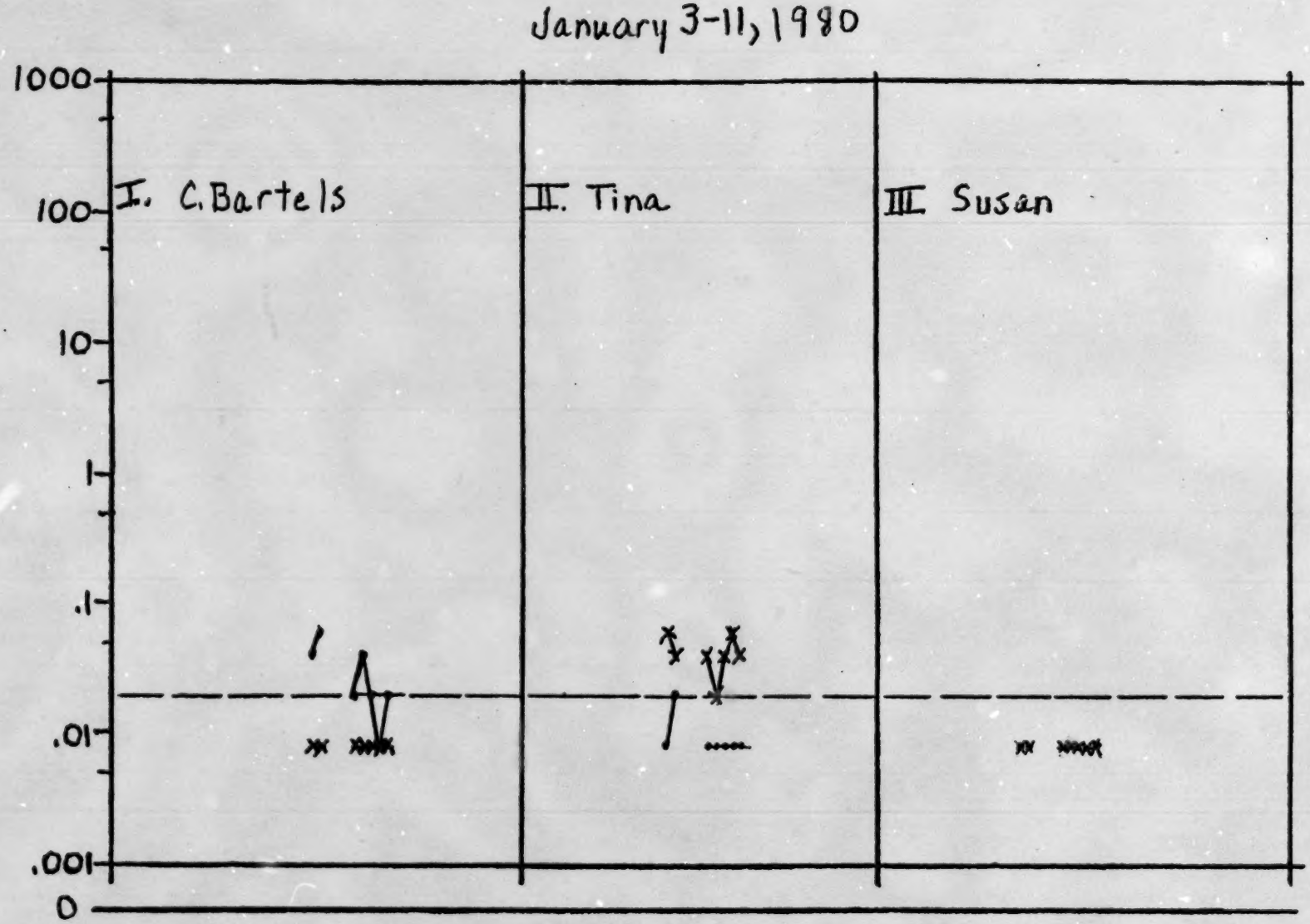

Figure 2

A. Colkin C. Bartels

9 Capital City Schools

Susan C. Bartels

positive and negative responses

10

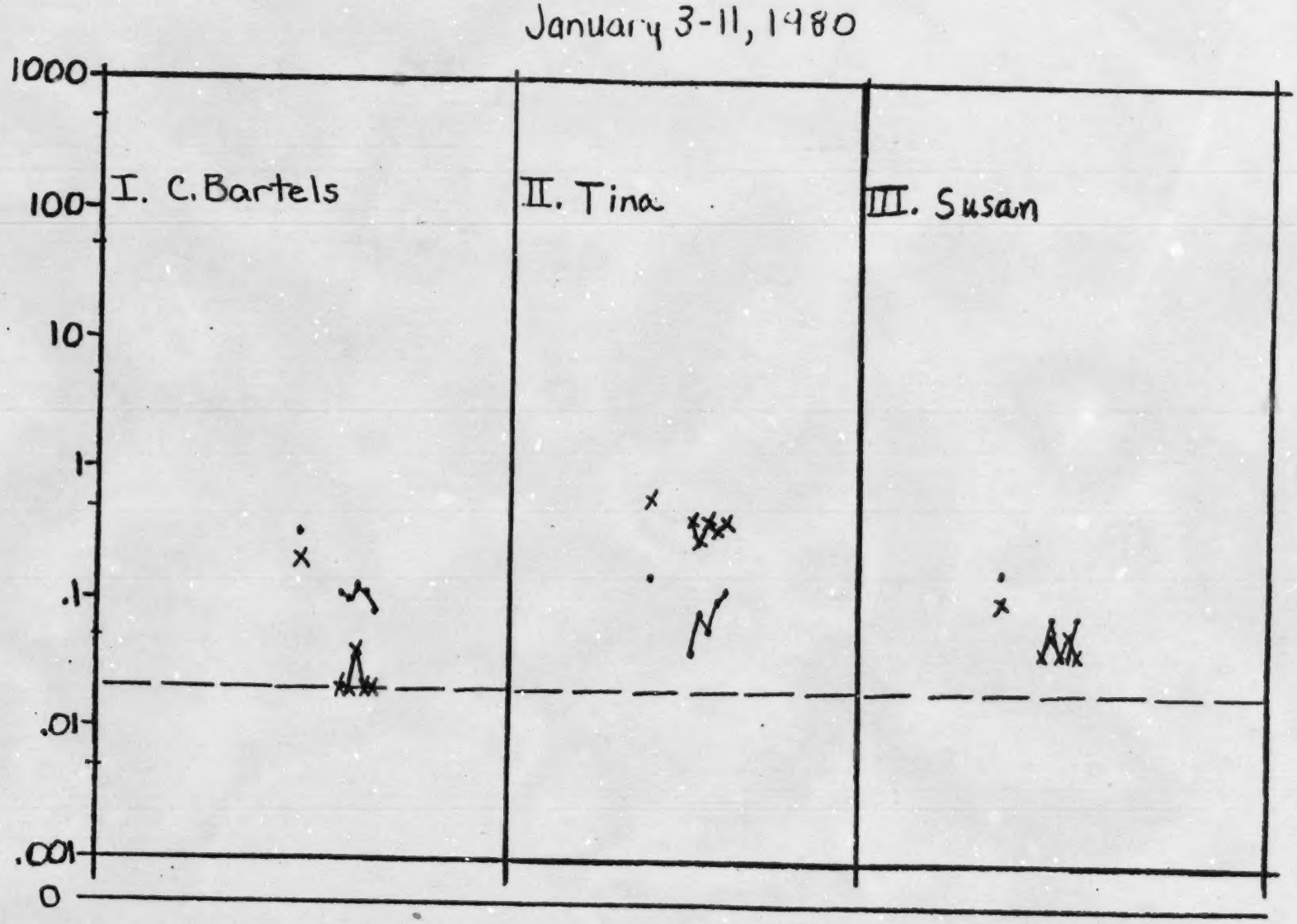

Figure 3

A. Calkin C. Bartels
Capital City Schools
Topeka, KS

C. Bartels C. Bartels

positive and negative responses

hoped-for progress in getting students to count feelings. Admitting our own feelings of discouragement, we developed the hierarchy in Figure 4 to help us teach students to learn to count positive and negative feelings.

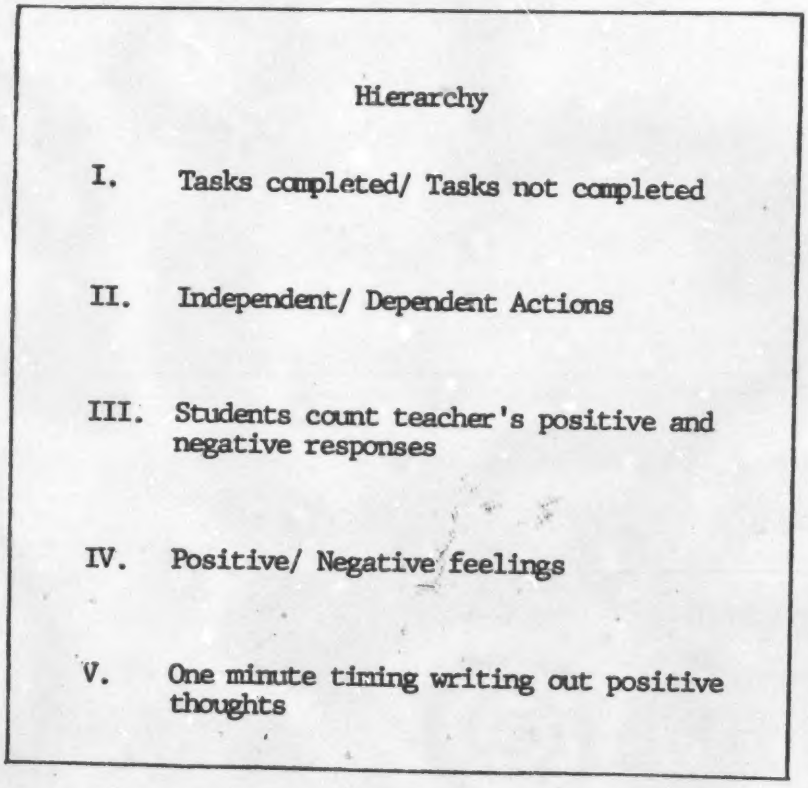
Hierarchy
I. Tasks completed/ Tasks not completed
II. Independent/ Dependent Actions
III. Students count teacher's positive and negative responses
IV. Positive/ Negative feelings
V. One minute timing writing out positive thoughts

Figure 4. Hierarchy to teach students to count feelings.

The first phase of the hierarchy involves counting tasks completed and tasks not completed. In this phase students are taught how to count. They have certain tasks to complete during the hour. They count the number of assigned tasks completed and not completed.

Figure 5 shows that all students increased the number of tasks they completed each day and decreased or maintained at zero the number they did not complete each day. The students did not have difficulty counting this once it was explained. They also all did well at improving on this task.

Phase two of the hierarchy requires students to count independent and dependent actions in class. This phase personalizes the counting. Students are required to count their own actions and make a judgement in categorizing their behavior. Independent actions include activities such as following directions, using skills, and solving problems by oneself. Dependent actions include activities done with excessive questioning about directions and problem solving, mistrust of personal knowledge, and not working without teacher help.

Figure 6 shows that each of the students increased his independent actions and decreased dependent actions. All five students showed maximum change here. This shows that each of these students improved their independent behavior. This chart shows greater learning than the tasks chart in Figure 5, since each student increased his independence and decreased his dependence.

Figure 7 shows Steve's chart of independent and dependent action. Each of the last three weeks shows a marked pattern. As the week progresses, he becomes more independent and less dependent. Steve has much freedom at home, perhaps too much. Thus when he returns to school at the beginning of the week, he is more dependent and asks unnecessary questions. Perhaps he needs help first hour Monday morning to help him structure the rest of the week. By the end of the week, he's increased his independent actions and decreased his dependent actions.

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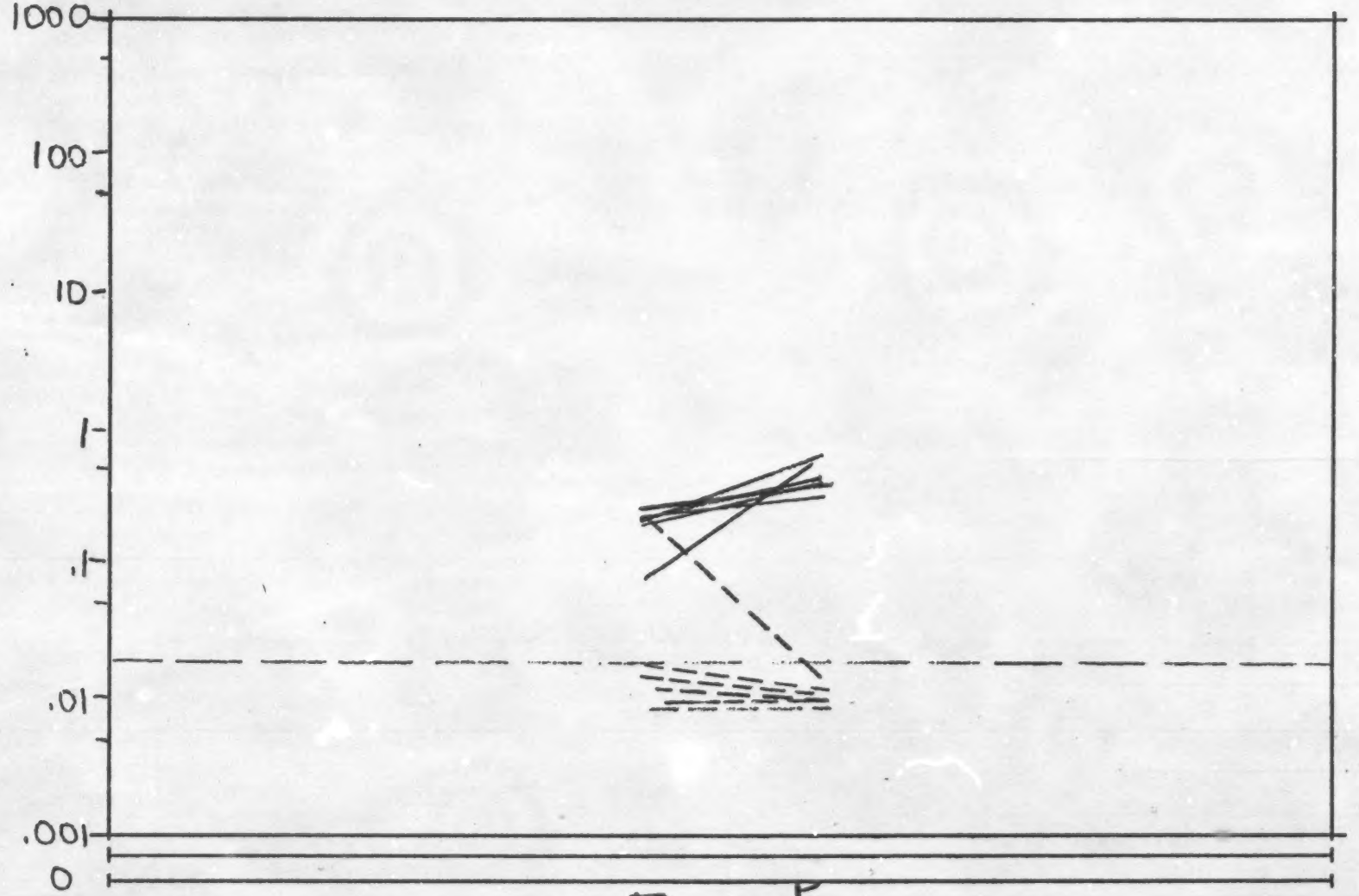

Figure 5
Celeration Collection

tasks completed / not completed

CHART TRACER (CT-9EN)
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BOX 3361 – KANSAS CITY, KANS. 66103

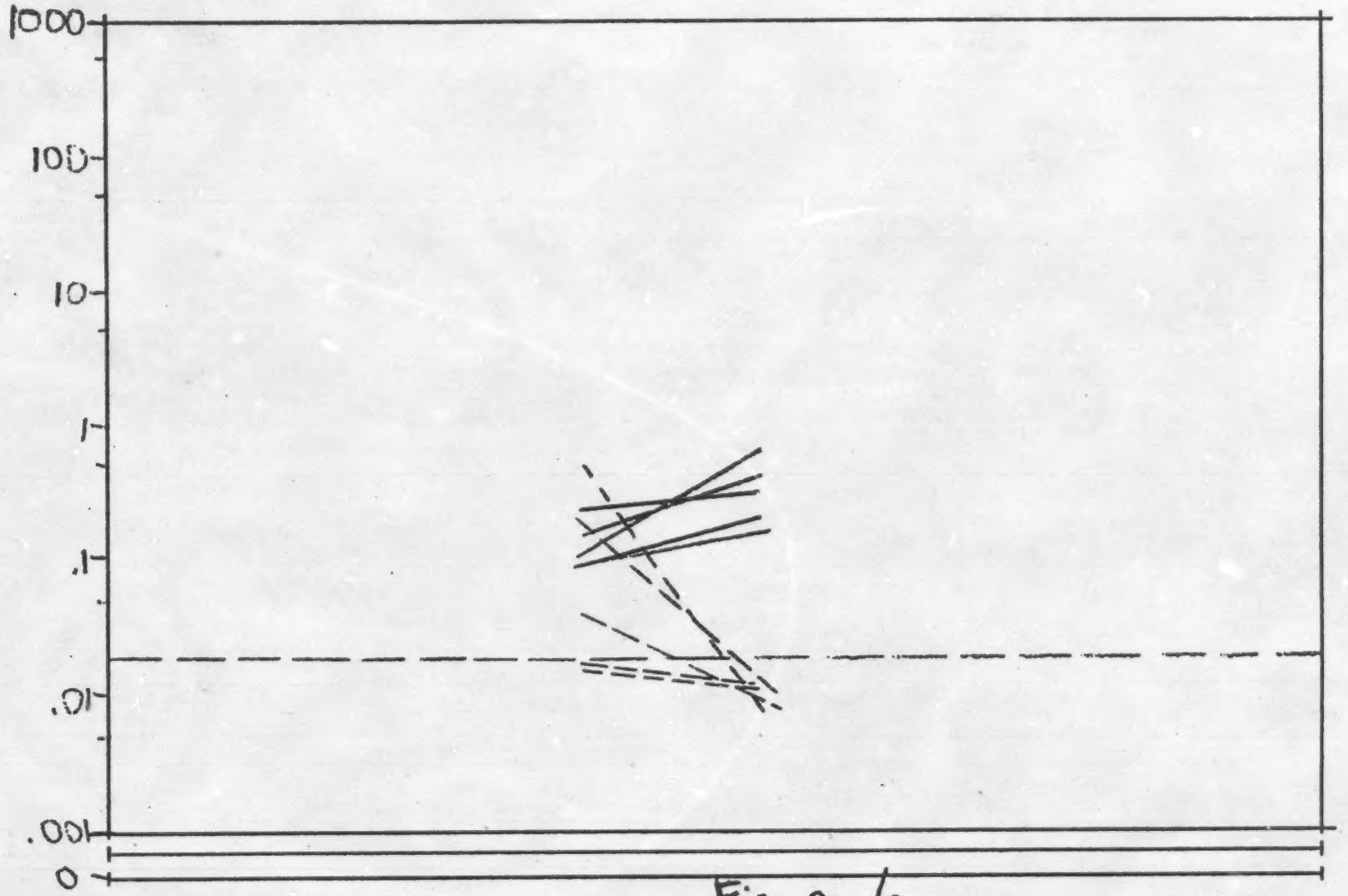

Figure 6
Celeration Collection

tasks done
independently /
dependently

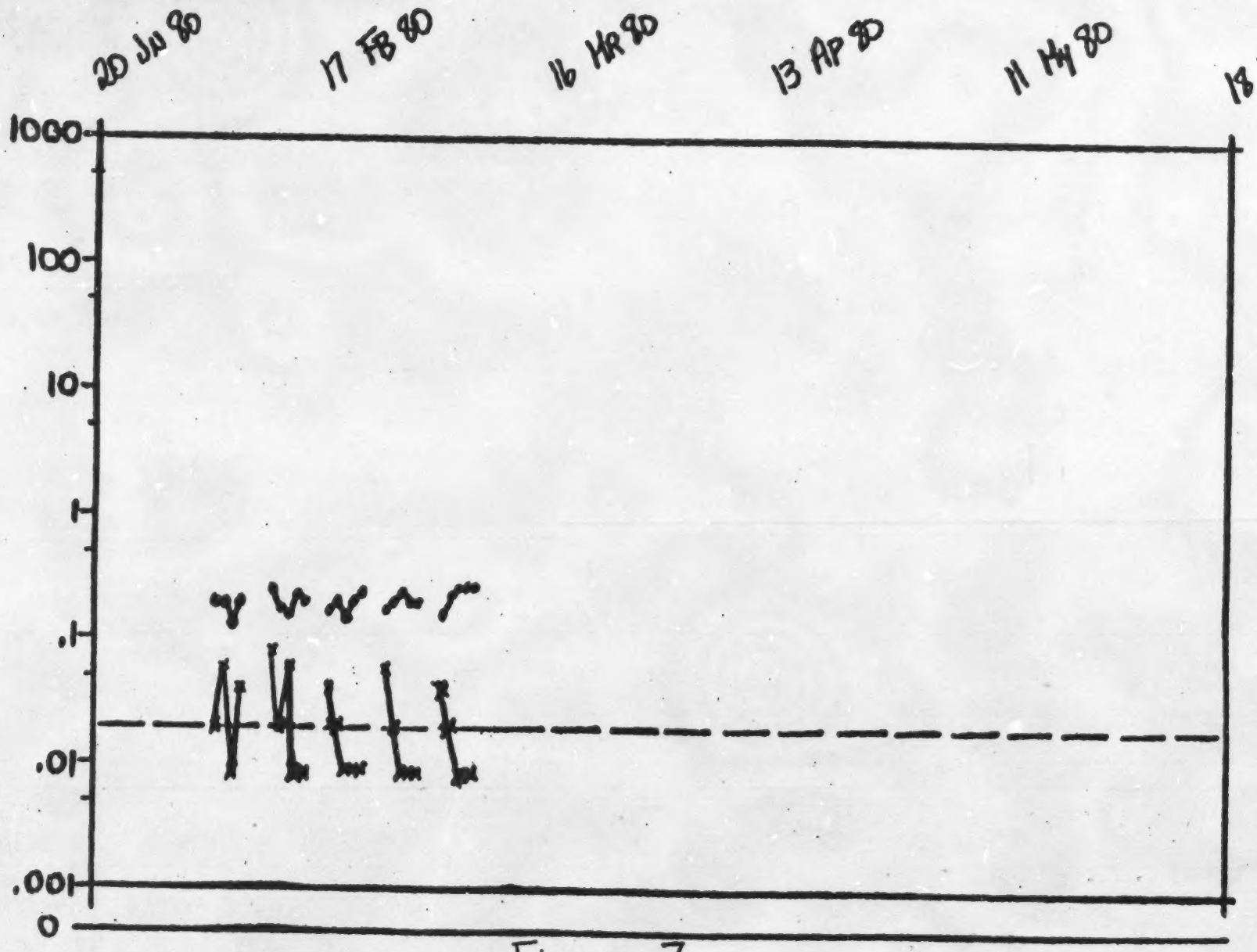

Figure 7

19 A. Calkin C. Bartels Steve 18 • Independar
Capital City Schools C. Bartels Steve Bartels/Steve student x Dependen
Topeka Ks

The third phase, at present, involves having students count their perception of the teacher's positive and negative statements to the class during the course of the hour. This strategy exposes the students to counting their perception of positive and negative outer behaviors.

Phase four brings students to the counting of positive and negative feelings about themselves. In counting this, students are allowed to write out the positives and negatives they feel over the course of the hour, or they are allowed to keep a tally. By phase four, then, students reach the goal of counting positive and negative self feelings. If positive feelings are high and negative feelings are low, we can say that person has a positive, good self-concept. If the feeling counts overlap, or if negative feelings are high and positives low, we can say this person has a low self-concept.

One student seemed eager to skip steps. Joy said she was bored with counting tasks completed and not completed and not interested in counting independent and dependent actions. At her request she began counting positive and negative thoughts and feelings. The following are some examples of Joy's positive and negative thoughts and feelings about herself during class. These are quotations from her.

Examples of positive thoughts and feelings

I completed my assignment

I did it all on my own

I got it all right

I am in a good mood

I look nice today

I was pleasant to others in the class

Examples of negative thoughts and feelings

I didn't do what I was supposed to do

I didn't feel good

I dozed off in class

I didn't get much done

I was hostile

I cut down the teacher when she tried to help me

Figure 8 shows the results of her counts. Her positives are increasing and her negatives are decreasing.

Phase five of the hierarchy is a strategy used to help students increase their positive self-feelings and decrease their negative self-feelings. During one minute, students write down as many positive things about themselves as they can. The goal of this strategy is to help students increase their feelings of self-worth and thus improve their self-concept.

Conclusions

The entire hierarchy takes into account many of the problems encountered and the goals of the project. By following the steps of the

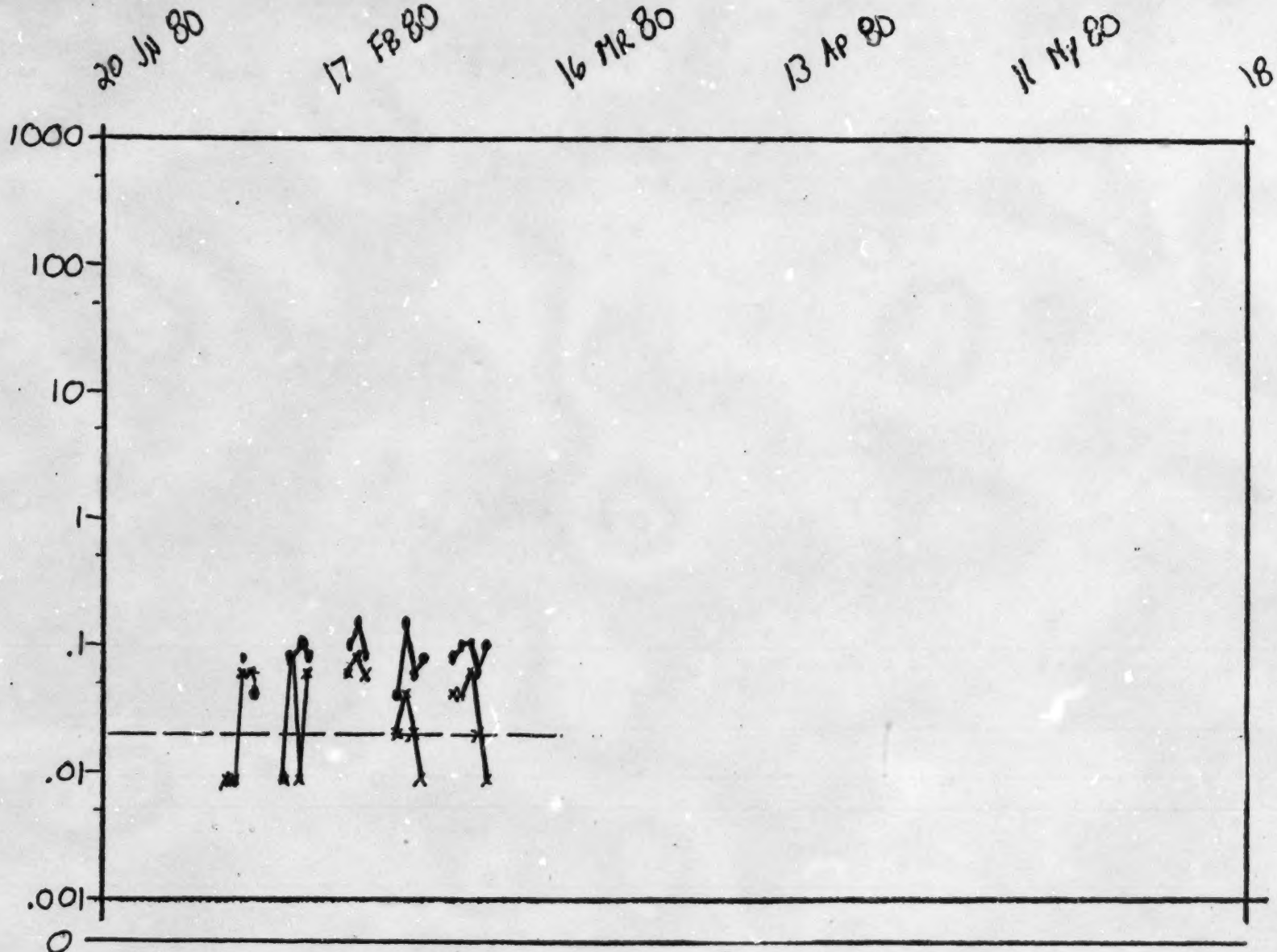

Figure 8

A. Calkin C. Bartels Joy 16 student negative self-thought

Capital City Schools C. Bartels Joy Bartels / Joy

Topeka, Ks.

hierarchy, we taught students to count, personalized the counting, taught them to identify positives and negatives, and then combined these skills to reach the goal of counting positive and negative self-feelings. The hierarchy seems to solve many problems, and makes a logical progression from non-counting to improved self-concept.

At this point in time, most students have only completed phases I and II of the hierarchy.

Obviously much work needs to be done. The concern is getting students to count positive and negative self-feelings or thoughts. They are so frightened of being identified; one way we have already decided to solve that problem is to allow the students to use code names for their charts and code words for their thoughts. The next concern is that of validating the hierarchy. Even at this point, we see places that need revision. If someone like Joy can skip a step in hierarchy, is it a hierarchy? And obviously, we need much more data on the inners and on the improvement of self-concept. It is so very difficult to persuade students to count inners. We must devise ways to make it easier. We see these as the points for further research and development.

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